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**PREMIER'S  
YOUTH  
OFFICE  
97/98**



## MESSAGE FROM THE PREMIER

# Continuing the dialogue

**W**hen I spoke with young people at the Premier's Youth Forum in February of 1997, they told me about their concerns for the future, their goals, and their suggestions for the best way government can help them secure a brighter future.

Many of the initiatives you will read about in this report were a direct response to concerns raised by young people at the forum.

Among some of the highlights, the B.C. government's youth employment and training programs created close to 12,000 positions for youth. Spaces in post-secondary institutions were increased, and we froze tuition for a second year in a row.

I worked with the other Premiers to fast track a national strategy on youth unemployment and student debt, and B.C. called for a national tuition freeze so that youth across the country would have the same educational benefits as young people here.

Our Youth web site has been visited by thousands of young people from across the province (and around the world). Many young people wrote us with their questions and comments.

Towards the end of 1997, the attention of the country turned to the issue of teen violence. Young people at our mini-forum on Racism and Youth Violence voiced their fears and concerns — and worked together to develop practical solutions.

Despite the successes, work remains to be done. Youth unemployment is still a concern, not only in B.C. but across the country. The changing nature of the economy also demands that young people, government, business and communities all work together to come up with creative ways to create jobs for young people.

If giving young people a voice was the overriding theme in 1997, it is my hope that in 1998 we can continue to work together to create long-term solutions to youth unemployment.

The 1997 employment and training programs would not have been possible without the support of all the ministries and Crown corporations.

Also, a special thanks to the people who staff the youth information line. They provide young people with their first introduction to our programs, and

were invaluable to the success of last year.

It is also important to remember that it was the frank and open nature of the dialogue at last year's forum which was the impetus for many of the initiatives we introduced in 1997, and I will continue this discussion in 1998. We will

also broaden the focus of the range of programs available for youth with Youth Options B.C. — which features an expansion of many of our current programs, and includes several new programs.

I am looking forward to continuing the dialogue with youth and working together to build a better society for our future.

**Premier Glen Clark,  
Minister Responsible for Youth**

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# **We can and must do more**

**A**s the Premier's Advisor on Youth, I am pleased to present this report to British Columbians, especially those aged 15 to 24. The following pages highlight the activities of the Premier's Youth Office over the past year, and offer a small glimpse into what's ahead for 1998-99.

Just over two years ago, the Premier and I had a vision of a provincial government youth office. This office would work together with other areas of government and deal with the myriad of issues affecting the young people of British Columbia, with a special emphasis on education and youth employment.

No other province in the country had yet designated a separate office for youth issues. Premier Glen Clark became Minister Responsible for Youth, and the Premier's Youth Office was formed. British Columbia also has the distinction of being the only province to have a Minister Responsible for Youth — a reflection of his commitment to the young people of B.C., and a recognition of the central role of youth in the future of our province. Two years later, I am grateful to all who have helped make our successes and to all who believe in our vision.

I am honoured to serve as Premier Glen Clark's Advisor on Youth for a third year. I have learned a great deal from interacting with the young people of the province over the past few years, and about

their concerns and hopes for the future.

A year ago, at the Premier's Youth Forum in Vancouver, young people expressed the need for a voice, and for government to enable them to exercise that voice. We responded to that with the "Voice for Youth" web site; held a mini-forum on racism and violence; and ensured that young people had one-stop access to government information and programs through a toll-free youth information line.

It has also been a pleasure to work with the many individuals in the ministries and Crown corporations who develop and deliver the youth programs, and I thank you for your support.

The success of the 1997 youth initiatives depended upon their hard work, and we could not have come this far without them. Of course, I recognize and salute all the youth who have participated in

our programs and who have made our vision a reality.

There are also many individuals and organizations in our communities working on behalf of young people on a variety of issues. In 1997 we increased our efforts to reach out to the community and showed our support for these organizations. We

will continue further outreach in 1998 to ensure that all young people can take advantage of the opportunities we offer.

*...no other province in Canada has designated a separate office to address the concerns of youth....*



**Renée Saklikar,**  
*Premier's Advisor on Youth*

## **How to reach the Premier's Youth Office**

*If you have any questions about these initiatives, or any of the material in this report, please contact:*

**730-999 Canada Place, Vancouver, B.C. V6C 3E1**

**Phone: (604) 844-1859**

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# MANDATE

**T**he Premier's Youth Office supports the Premier in his role as Minister Responsible for Youth.

**W**e design, deliver and communicate programs and initiatives for the young people of British Columbia. "Youth" are those individuals aged 15-24 years.

**O**ur objective is to identify issues of concern to the young people of British Columbia, and develop and implement public policy that addresses these issues.

**T**he key issues which young people have identified as of primary importance are access to post-secondary education and jobs.

**W**e work with policy and communications staff in key ministries and Crown corporations to ensure that youth initiatives are in place across government, and that these initiatives address the key concerns of the young people of British Columbia.

# MANDATE

## A VOICE FOR YOUTH 1997

The central theme underlying the Premier's Youth Office initiatives for 1997 was "A Voice for Youth".

On February 20, 1997, more than 100 young people from across B.C. gathered in Vancouver for the 1997 Premier's Youth Forum.

Participants at the first Premier's Youth Forum (1996) had stressed the importance of jobs and education, and these continued to be key issues this year.

However, in 1997, young people also talked about the need to have a platform for their views and about ways to ensure that they had input into the decisions that affect their lives.

We took their demands seriously, and in the months after the forum, Premier Clark announced the following initiatives to further these objectives.

## **A Voice for Youth web site: [www.youth.gov.bc.ca](http://www.youth.gov.bc.ca)**

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The Premier's Youth Web site was officially launched in February, 1997, in response to requests at the forum a year earlier. The site provides detailed information about government youth programs and initiatives, and also features the Premier's E-Forum, which gives young people the opportunity to ask questions of the Premier, and receive responses.

The site also contains a Youth news section, and an extensive resources page which provides links to education and employment related sites. The site is constantly evolving to meet changing needs, and in response to suggestions from young people. From April 1, 1997, to March 31, 1998 there were 29,371 visitors to the site.

## **Toll-free information line: 1-800-784-0055**

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Young people also indicated that they needed accurate information, and convenient access to that information, in order to make informed choices. The toll-free line was created with that purpose in mind.

The calls are handled by experienced, knowledgeable staff who provide information on youth employment, skills training, post-secondary programs as well as other youth programs throughout government, including Youth on Boards, B.C. Benefits, and the Jobs for B.C. initiative. Over the past year, the phone line logged 7,273 calls from youth and employers.

## **Youth and the Internet – Youth training youth**

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An important part of ensuring that youth have a voice is making sure that they are well trained in emerging forms of communication. At Forum '97, young people agreed that they had to have access to the hardware, and the skills necessary to use the Internet effectively.

As a result of this need, the provincial government, high technology firms and public libraries joined together to create Youth and the Internet. This successful pilot project was launched in May, and created jobs for 24 young people – in addition to increasing access to Internet services for youth in 10 communities throughout BC.

The Youth and the Internet project provided

extensive Internet training to youth who then developed local web sites and returned to their communities to train other young people. The province provided conditional grants to participating libraries across the province to enable them to hire young people as trainers. These young people then worked with their libraries to provide extensive Internet training to hundreds of youth and others in their communities. Youth and the Internet has been renamed Youth@BC and expanded for 1998.

**Highlight:** Fraser Valley Regional Library was one of the libraries involved in 1997. The youth created two web sites, and provided Internet training to over 540 people during the three months of the project.

## **Young people gain a place at the board table**

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Youth on Boards was launched in November 1997. Under this initiative, young people have an opportunity to serve as members of public service boards – thereby having the chance to express their ideas, and influence decision-making.

A youth presence on citizen boards provides the balance and diversity needed for the board to make well-informed decisions – those that take into account the views of young people. In turn, young people gain work experience and increase their self-confidence. Young people interested in the program can fill out an application on the youth web site.

## **Your choice, your voice – a mini- forum on racism/youth violence**

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Young people are also concerned about violence and racism in their schools and communities. On December 5, 1997, more than 80 students from high schools around Vancouver gathered at a mini-forum on racism and youth violence. The forum was organized by the Premier's Youth Office with the support of the Attorney-General's Community Programs Division.

The forum gave young people an opportunity to discuss racism and violence in their schools, and identify practical projects. By the end of the forum, each of the school groups had developed at least one project idea to implement in their own school. Their ideas ranged from organizing an anti-racism march to mentoring elementary students. "We were already doing lots at our school...but now we intend to do even more" said one forum participant. ★



Young people across B.C., and across Canada, continue to face significant challenges in getting a foothold in the labour market.

As B.C.'s population continues to expand, job opportunities for younger people cannot keep pace with the demand.

In addition, while B.C.'s economy is generating a significant number of new jobs all the time, young people often must compete for those jobs with older, more experienced workers.

The current youth employment situation requires an integrated approach to addressing the problem.

Education, skills training, and work experience are key components of any youth strategy.

## **Close to 12,000 young people received jobs or training**

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In March, 1997, a comprehensive \$24-million job and training program was launched. Last year's Guarantee for Youth continued and built upon the success of the previous year, and included two new programs.

Young people were given access to a range of jobs and training programs which were designed to meet the needs of 15-24 year olds who may be at very different stages of their lives. Some are looking for their first job, some are graduating from university, and others are trying to move out of welfare and into the workforce.

The seven programs provided last year reflected these diverse needs. A total of 11,528 young people received jobs or training through Student Summer Works '97; E-Teams; YouBET!; Youth Mentorship; First Job in Science and Technology; Job Start and the Crown Youth Employment Initiative.

Youth Works, which is funded separately under B.C. Benefits, provided training and work experience to an additional 29,786 youth to help move them off welfare and into the work force.

## **Student Summer Works '97 funds 3,292 summer jobs for students**

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Student Summer Works '97, a program of the Ministry of Advanced Education, Training & Technology, focused upon employment in science and technology and other key sectors.

An investment of \$6.2 million provided close to 3,300 jobs for students in 1997. The jobs encompassed a variety of disciplines and areas, including silviculture technicians, photographers, and display designers.

Host agencies (contracted to administer the program) were responsible for supplying information and applications to potential employers, approving positions and providing wage reimbursements to funded employers. The host agencies are also required to hire students to coordinate program delivery.

The nine host agencies in 1997 met the challenge of providing 400 more jobs than the previous year — with the same program budget.

*...Student Summer Works focused on jobs in key sectors like science and technology...*

**Highlight:** Three students received jobs in the field of television production through Forefront Entertainment Group's Summer on Set project last summer. Forefront Entertainment, which produces the hit TV series *Madison*, hired three students through Student Summer Works '97.

The students were recruited through a contest which asked them to send in videotaped or written submissions describing why they wanted to work on the set. One student from Templeton secondary in East Vancouver, and two from Brookwood secondary in Langley, received jobs in production, marketing and publicity, and work as a technician on the set.

### **E-teams gave 1,500 youth hands-on work protecting environment**

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Environment Youth Teams (E-Teams), administered by the Ministry of Environment, Lands & Parks, provides paid work experience for young people who are not in school. The teams are made up of young people aged 16-24 who gain experience and training on a variety of environmental projects.

Last year, E-Teams provided jobs for 1,546 young people. E-Teams are made up of the following three components:

- Work Crews are made up of crew members working in the fields with a supervisor.
- Interns work on environmental projects in a more structured workplace.
- Eco-Ed teams deliver educational projects on environment-related issues.

**Highlight:** Five out of the 10 crew members in one E-Team project moved immediately into new jobs upon completing the project. One young man in another project was a 'street kid', and at first had difficulty showing up on time and staying for the day.

However, with the structure the program provided, he soon became a responsible member of the team, and now has a full-time, permanent job.

### **YouBET! provided small business training to over 1,400 youth**

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YouBET! (Youth Business Entrepreneurship Training) offers young people in B.C. an opportunity to learn more about business and cooperatives in a structured setting. The program, delivered by the Ministry of Small Business, Tourism & Culture, has a series of workshops in five stages, giving youth the

options to see first-hand what it takes to be in business and learn what resources are available in their communities.

In total, 1,455 young people received training in small business planning through YouBET! Since the program began, at least 100 new businesses have been launched by young people who have received training under YouBET!

**Highlight:** Young people have launched successful businesses throughout B.C., including Wordweaver Communications (Victoria) and Minotaur Media Web Designers (Vancouver), The Edge Goaltending School (Peachland) and Bent Twig Furniture (Salmon Arm).

### **Over 300 young people matched with experienced business mentors**

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Youth in stages 2 & 4 of the YouBET! program are matched with local business mentors, as part of the Youth Mentorship Program. This program provided 334 youth with the opportunity to benefit from the experience and advice of business people in their community. Last year, Youth Mentorship was developed by the Ministry of Employment & Investment.

### **186 positions in First Job In Science & Technology**

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Through partnerships with B.C. high tech businesses, First Job in Science and Technology provides graduates in science, technology or engineering with their first full-time employment. Approximately 75 per cent of youth hired through the program are kept on by the employers in permanent positions following the subsidy period.

A total of 186 recent graduates received their first jobs in science and technology through the program last year. This program was administered by the Information, Science & Technology Agency.

### **Job Start gave work to over 900 youth with little or no experience**

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Many employers say that the biggest barrier for them to hire youth is the cost of training people who have no previous work experience.

Job Start was developed by the Ministry of Employment & Investment to help young people between the ages of 17 and 24 gain work experience

and marketable job skills in short-term positions which may lead to long-term employment with participating employers.

Employers are provided with a wage subsidy to help offset the cost of training. A total of 924 youth who had little or no previous work experience were hired during the first year of Job Start. This year, Job Start will be delivered by the Ministry of Advanced Education, Training & Technology.

**Highlight:** Electronic Arts (Canada) Inc. – a Burnaby-based software giant that manufactures video games – hired 23 youth through Job Start to work in the quality assurance department. Today, 21 of those youth are still employed at Electronic Arts.

### **Crowns hire over 3,700 youth in both summer and full-time jobs**

Between March, 1997, and March, 1998, the Crown Youth Employment Initiative has provided 3,767 jobs for young people.

The 13 provincial Crown corporations offer a wide range of both summer and full-time employment opportunities, including positions at B.C. Hydro, B.C. Transit, ICBC and the PNE. Young people have been employed in a variety of positions, including computer analysts, management trainees, and road safety advisors.

### **Highlights of the 1997 Crown Youth Initiative**

The ICBC Road Safety Program provided 100 summer jobs for young people across the province. It was a partnership between ICBC and the B.C. Safety Council, and involved young people in a variety of projects promoting Road Safety initiatives. In Kelowna, for example, eight young people talked to high school students about impaired driving, bicycle safety and avoiding auto theft.

They also promoted the ICBC campaign against drinking and driving, built a safe driving float for summer parades in the region, and visited communities around the area with their road safety message.

The BCBC Generation "Y" Program provides work experience for youth at risk. The six-month program (two sessions per year) gives 10-12 young people an opportunity to spend two days out of the week upgrading their education, while working at grounds

maintenance and gardening on BCBC's Riverview facility for the remainder of the week.

Most of the young people have experienced substance abuse problems, been in trouble with the law, or dropped out of high school.

About half of the young people selected complete the program, (a relatively good success rate, given the challenges they face). Many of those who complete the program also go back to finish their high school grade 12 diplomas.

*...Electronic Arts hired 23 people through Job Start – 21 of them are now employed full-time by the Burnaby-based software giant...*

### **Youth Works**

Youth Works replaces welfare for young people. A living allowance is provided and participants learn skills for finding and keeping a job.

Last year, a total of 29,786 young people received job search assistance, job preparation, work experience and skills training to help them get out of welfare and into the workforce.

### **Minimum wage increased to keep pace with inflation**

In November, 1997, the Premier announced that the minimum wage will increase from \$7 to \$7.15 per hour effective April 1, 1998. (Piece rates for farmworkers and daily rates for resident caretakers, domestic workers, live-in home care workers and live-in summer camp leaders will also increase).

Increasing the provincial minimum wage to keep pace with inflation will benefit an estimated 100,000 B.C. workers, about 60,000 of whom are under the age of 25. ★



# IMPROVING ACCESS TO POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

**H**igher education shouldn't be out of reach. We took steps to make sure that education remained affordable and accessible for young people in 1997. Tuition fees were frozen for a second year in a row in British Columbia, in contrast to large increases seen in provinces across Canada. An estimated 150,000 B.C. students benefited from the tuition freeze.

We also provided guidelines to post-secondary institutions on obtaining student input before raising ancillary fees.

As well, 2,900 new spaces were created at B.C.'s colleges and universities this year (in addition to the

7,000 created in 1996), to ensure that all qualified students had a place in our education system.

**Improved Student Aid:** The following were among the changes to student aid in 1997:

- Students who are single parents now have an additional year to complete their studies and remain eligible for full loan remission. This change takes into consideration the challenges faced by parents who are raising children and going to school at the same time.
- Students can now check upon the status of their B.C. Student Loan through the Ministry of Education web site, 24 hours a day.★

## NATIONAL PLAN TO CUT STUDENT DEBT & YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT

**B**ritish Columbia's grant and loan forgiveness programs continued to keep B.C. students' debt among the lowest in the country upon graduation. The portion of the debt attributed to the federal government's Canada Student Loans, however, continued to increase. The individual debt level projections (pre-remission level) for students graduating in April 1998 with a 4-year degree is \$23,000. For students graduating in April '99, it's \$25,000.

As B.C. continued to expand and improve its role in providing financial assistance to students and addressing youth unemployment, it became increasingly evident that national action was needed on both fronts. Across the country, tuition fees were increasing, student debt was reaching unmanageable levels, and youth unemployment rates remained high.

Premier Clark recognized the importance of federal co-operation and a national role in tackling these two growing problems and worked together with other provinces throughout 1997 to bring the problem to the attention of the federal government. A number of events throughout 1997 highlighted our commitment

to cut student debt and reduce youth unemployment, and push for national action.

### Western Premiers Conference May 1997, Campbell River, BC

Premier Clark chaired the annual Western Premiers Conference in 1997, and raised the issues of youth unemployment and student debt.

At the conclusion of the conference, Western Premiers called upon Ottawa to implement a national student debt reduction program. The Premiers also agreed to develop a Western Best Practices Report on youth employment to be presented at the Annual Premier's Conference in August, 1997. B.C. took the lead in developing the report on behalf of the four western provinces and two territories.

The Western Best Practices Report is designed to complement and provide a western perspective into the development of a national strategy. The report recommended that the western jurisdictions identify a range of options which would be used to develop an aggressive agenda for action on youth initiatives.

## **Annual Premiers Conference August '97, New Brunswick**

Youth unemployment and student debt continued to be key issues at the Annual Premiers Conference. The Western Premier's Best Practices Report on Youth Employment was tabled at the conference and served as a basis for the national Best Practices Report to be released at the First Ministers' meeting.

## **Canadian Federation of Students Annual Conference November '97, Ottawa**

Premier Glen Clark was invited to speak to the annual Canadian Federation of Students Conference in Ottawa. In addition to calling for a nation-wide tuition freeze, the Premier pointed out that Ottawa needs to work with the provinces to develop a national plan that combines affordable, accessible post-secondary education with youth employment programs. A national plan would set firm targets, and be composed of the following initiatives:

1. Easier access to post-secondary education through a combination of a national tuition fee freeze and expanded capacity.
2. More affordable post-secondary education through a comprehensive national grant program. This program would replace a portion of a Canada Student Loan with a grant, and include initiatives to help reduce overall debt upon graduation.
3. Increase access to jobs through a federal-provincial-territorial agreement which reduces duplication in youth employment program delivery, expands federal funding and involves the private sector.

First Ministers agreed to take action. In its February, 1998 budget, the federal government implemented a national grant program, but it is limited to students with dependents. B.C. continues to press for national action to make education more affordable. ★

# **OUTREACH ACTIVITIES 1997**

**O**utreach to the community was an important component of the work at the Premier's Youth Office in 1997. The following are just a few of the activities and events in which we participated to support organizations working on behalf of young people.

- Visited Forefront Productions (who hired three young people to work on the set of 'Madison' in 1997 as part of our Student Summer Works program).
- Took part in the McCreary Centre panel discussion on "Health Resources for Young People on the Internet."
- Congratulated young women recipients of the Women of Distinction Awards.
- Set up an information booth at the PNE Jobs Fair during Youth Week (May 4-11).
- Visited the Open Learning Agency Open House; The Youth Writer's Awards Ceremony at Richmond Public Library; and Katimavik (a program through which participants are given the opportunity to gain work experience and discover the three regions of Canada).

- Met with young people involved with the Living Wall Garden Project (a youth-work project for street youth).
- Spoke on the "Youth Rap Radio Show," and attended the launch of two new South-Asian magazines - Aaj and Mehfil Youth.
- Joined the Red Cross in celebrating 75 years of the involvement of young people in their programs.
- Met with 60 high school students from Coquitlam Centennial to discuss youth employment, access to education and a range of other topics.
- Launched a newsletter which communicates information to young people about ongoing youth office initiatives.
- Attended the '98 Gulf Island Film & Television School (GIFTS) Awards to present the Best Graduate Video award and to congratulate the GIFTS students on their excellent presentations. ★



# 1998 AND BEYOND...

**Y**outh Options B.C. is a new job, training and skills development initiative that dramatically increases the government's commitment to British Columbians aged 15-24. It builds upon the success of initiatives since 1996 that froze tuition fees, created new spaces in college and university, and delivered a range of job and training programs for youth.

Through Youth Options B.C., young people will be provided with the experience, education and skills necessary to build a career in today's changing economy.

A key component of this strategy is ensuring young people can access post-secondary education. Youth Options B.C. continues the commitment to affordable and accessible education in 1998.

An additional 2,900 spaces will be created in post-secondary institutions this year to ensure all qualified B.C. students have a space – 500 of which have been designated for hi-tech courses. In all, this brings the total new spaces created since 1996 to just under 13,000.

Funding for B.C. student assistance will be increased by 14%, benefiting approximately 55,000 students who receive financial aid. Funding for post-secondary institutions has also been increased. The tuition freeze is extended for a third year in a row, and expanded to include a freeze on ancillary fees. Finally, tuition has been eliminated for Adult Basic Education programs, benefiting 45,000 people across B.C.

The job and training programs under Youth Options B.C. have been expanded significantly – a budget of \$36 million has been provided to fund up to 17,000 job and training positions for youth. This is a 50 per cent increase in funding and targets over last year.

A major component of this expansion is the increased commitment to funding for summer jobs – Student Summer Works '98 will receive \$9.3 million in funding to create 5,000 summer jobs for students

this year. All of the successful programs from last year – E-Teams, Job Start, YouBET! and Youth Mentorship, First Job in Science and Technology and the Crown Youth Employment Initiative will be continued, with most of these programs expanded.

Youth@BC, which was successfully launched as the pilot Youth and the Internet program in 10 communities last year, will be expanded to at least 40 communities this year.

Another successful existing program, BladeRunners, will be expanded to provide more opportunities for street youth in capital construction projects in new areas of the province.

Moreover, the new Youth Community Action program provides young people with an opportunity to earn tuition credits while working on community service projects.

We will continue our ongoing commitment to provide young people with a voice, through outreach activities and initiatives like Youth on Boards. We will also ensure that young people have improved access to information and resources about Youth Options B.C. and other government programs and services designed for them.

We will continue to provide toll-free telephone access to information for youth through the existing 1-800-784-0055 and a new Youth line 1-877-BC-YOUTH; and we will improve the youth web site [www.youth.gov.bc.ca](http://www.youth.gov.bc.ca) in response to input from youth.

A detailed Youth Options B.C. program booklet and a comprehensive job, training and education access guide to further assist youth in their job search will be distributed widely. ★

***...B.C. Youth will have a new toll-free line to call for information – 1-877-BC-YOUTH – that replaces the old 1-800 number...***